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ABSTRACT

After nearly 14 years of non-Indian administration, Laguna Elementary School (LES) has acquired a principal and a teacher supervisor who are not merely Indian, but of the Laguna Tribe itself, making LES the only school in the Southern Pueblos Agency with Tribal members as administrators. At first glance the situation is ideal, but there are several stumbling blocks for the new administration. The first stems from the idea that because of ancestry, Laguna administrators must always be compatible with tribal culture and traditions. The second stems from the lack of previous Indian administrators and the "Anglo is best" syndrome. Both cause dissatisfaction with the new personnel. To date, community acceptance of the two is fluctuating. Philosophically, the Laguna community is divided into two major groups. The more innovative and progressive community members have in general a higher socio-economic status and educational level and have been away from the reservation much more. They tend to be in favor of change and in favor of Indian administrators or those with proven ability. The more traditional group tends to support the idea of Anglo administrators due to lack of Indian role models in the past. (SB)

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Perhaps one of the changes that can most affect a school or school district is a change in administration. Quite often with a change of superintendent or principal there are changes in other key administrative personnel. This is the case at Laguna Elementary School. Additionally, there are usually changes in policy, and the overall effects are far reaching.

At Laguna Elementary School (LES) there had been a non-Indian administration for close to 14 years. When a vacancy occurred at the school for the position of principal, it took the BIA nearly two years to fill it. The Indian preference policy was in effect, and the Tribal Council had approval on the candidates who applied for the job; both circumstances had a great deal to do with the amount of time it took for the position to be filled. When the new principal was appointed he was not only Indian, but more specifically, Laguna. He then selected a new teacher-supervisor who was also Laguna. As a result, not only did Laguna have Tribal members as administrators of its elementary school, but it also was the only school in the Southern Pueblos Agency at which that administrative situation existed. In addition, there are many Lagunas on the staff at the school, both in teaching and non-teaching areas. There are also other Indians employed at LES, as well as non-Indians.

At first glance, it might seem that Laguna has a nearly ideal situation: many Indian people have long stressed the importance and value of having their own people involved on any and all levels of whatever enterprise affects them (education, business, politics, etc.). Indian involvement has often been touted as the answer to many of the problems Indian people face today. The situation at Laguna may help to add some perspective to those claims.

An all Laguna administration at LES was expected to be compatible with the traditions and culture of the Tribe even though both individuals in the administration had been away from the reservation for a number of years: they also speak Keres, and are therefore able to address the community members in either English or the mother tongue (this is very important at Laguna).

In regard to trialability, the administration was permanently assigned to Laguna; however they both underwent a period of "probation" during which their performance was observed and evaluated by their supervisors. As far as trialability with the Tribe, it is possible that had there been during that time, or were there at present, severe enough problems to necessitate their removal, Tribal pressure could have effected such action. Obviously such a step requires documentation and movement through the proper channels. There has been no such effort to date.

Related to the trialability of the present administration is its observability. LES is not a private school; the community members are welcome on the school grounds, and are encouraged to participate in school activities. The community has the opportunity to observe and react to policies set by the administration.

From an examination of the characteristics of the change from non-Indian to Indian administrators it would seem that the rate of adoption of the change is more positive than negative. However, there are other areas to be considered before any conclusions could be validly drawn.

At Laguna it was possible to observe the entire range of adopter categories, and to watch the process of acceptance that is presently taking place. This acceptance or rejection seems to be an ongoing and fluctuating process rather than a one-time decision.

There are individuals at LES and in the larger community who are extremely innovative and are looking for and developing new ideas. There are also persons at Laguna who seem to attach themselves to any new idea that is introduced without really examining the issue. For the most part, however, it appeared that there were a significant number of people who adhered to the early majority category of adopters, but with the difference that they maintained a small amount of skepticism (less than the late majority who exhibit a large amount of

skepticism).

Also observable at Laguna is the category of laggards. This was not unexpected however, and at least partially explained by an awareness of the demeanor of the community. Laguna is in a state of transition: tradition still exists, but it is having trouble surviving. In addition, there are many changes occurring on the reservation (new business developments, changing social philosophies, changing economics, changing priorities, etc.). There are therefore, different philosophies and attitudes in existence within a relatively small area. Along these lines then it is not difficult to see that many of the more traditional Lagunas tend to be more conservative when it comes to change. We are also dealing with a change that is based on a very touchy premise: race.

For many years Indian people have had to go to the Anglo for everything: the "Great White Father" syndrome is still existent. As a result many Indian people have come to have the opinion that if a service does not come from an Anglo it is not good or valid. Indian people have had few Indian role models in administrative positions, and are often skeptical of the abilities of Indians in these types of positions (this distrust occurs not only in regard to "power" positions, but in regard to other professions and skilled and semi-skilled jobs). At the same time when Indian

people do accept an Indian leader, they often have unrealistic expectations of the administrator's power and areas of responsibility. To be an Indian involved in the administration of Indian concerns can often create classic double bind situations: damned if you do and damned if you don't. To return to the reservation and work with your own people can complicate matters even more: if the administrator is Anglo, exceptions are made for him/her because he/she is not Indian and therefore cannot be expected to know the culture, traditions, philosophies, etc.; if the administrator is a member of another minority, the individual is not expected to understand Indians because he/she is looking at the situation from a different frame of reference; if the person is Indian but from another Tribe, he/she is excused for any mistakes on the grounds that this is not that person's home reservation; if however the administrator is from the local Tribe, he/she is expected to be perfect and do as the community desires, regardless of the applicability of those desires to the administrator's policies and decisions. As can readily be seen, a Laguna administration at Laguna Elementary School has a great deal to overcome and handle before it can be comfortable and maximally effective.

With such diversity within the community as regards cultural philosophies it may be assumed that there are at

least two types of opinion leaders: those who are more progressive in their views and those who are more representative of the traditional or conservative attitudes. Those opinion leaders who are more progressive may be seen to hold one of the following opinions: it is time an Indian, especially a Laguna, ran LES, or that it doesn't matter who the administration consists of as long as they do a good job. Some of the more traditional opinion leaders have felt that the administration should be non-Indian since non-Indians have more experience in such areas as administration. All of these attitudes are to be found at Laguna Elementary School and in the community. Whatever the initial response of the community members and staff to an all Laguna administration, it appears that the administration is being watched very closely. Community members are very verbal about their feelings and opinions regarding their interpretation of the performance of the administrators at LES.

Many of the more progressive opinion leaders have higher social and economic status, and very often have been away from the reservation for prolonged periods of time. They also seemed to have had more education than their followers. On the other hand, the more conservative opinion leaders were very often more concerned with maintaining the status quo, and had not been away from Laguna for any length of time.

Additionally there were non-Indian and non-Laguna opinion leaders who fit into both the progressive and conservative roles. Their opinions did not seem to be held as any more or less valuable or valid than the views of the Laguna opinion leaders, but this area may need closer investigation before any valid conclusions can be drawn.

The channel of communication that was utilized was almost exclusively word of mouth. The Tribal Council was involved in the initial selection of the principal, and after that the news and opinions were circulated through conversation. It is possible that the local newspaper, THE RED TIMES, THE PUEBLO NEWS, and any appropriate BIA newsletter might have carried informational coverage, but it is doubtful if the coverage took on a particularly editorial attitude.

The consequences of the change in administration at LES may be manyfold. It is possible that there may develop overall acceptance of the new administration (this has not occurred to date). It is also possible that there may be overall or majority rejection of the administration (this also has not occurred to date). Obviously the spectrum is wide: from overall acceptance to overall rejection and all the varying degrees in between. Acceptance or rejection may be limited to certain policies of the administration, or may be aimed more at one of the administrators than at the other.

Perhaps the most important aspect to remember is that should the administration succeed or fail, it must be determined on what criteria the success or failure is based: ethnic background, personality, competence, etc.. To assume that an all-Indian administration is best in the event of the present administration's success is every bit as unfair as assuming that if it fails in some way it proves that Indian people whould leave administration to non-Indians. It will be very interesting to continue to observe the change process at Laguna as regards the elementary school administration: acceptance and rejection are at this point tentative. A finalization of either attitude still depends on the future performance of the administration, and it is apparent that the community and staff of LES will be monitoring the situation very closely.